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AREA 88

by KAORU SHINTANI

BIWEEKLY

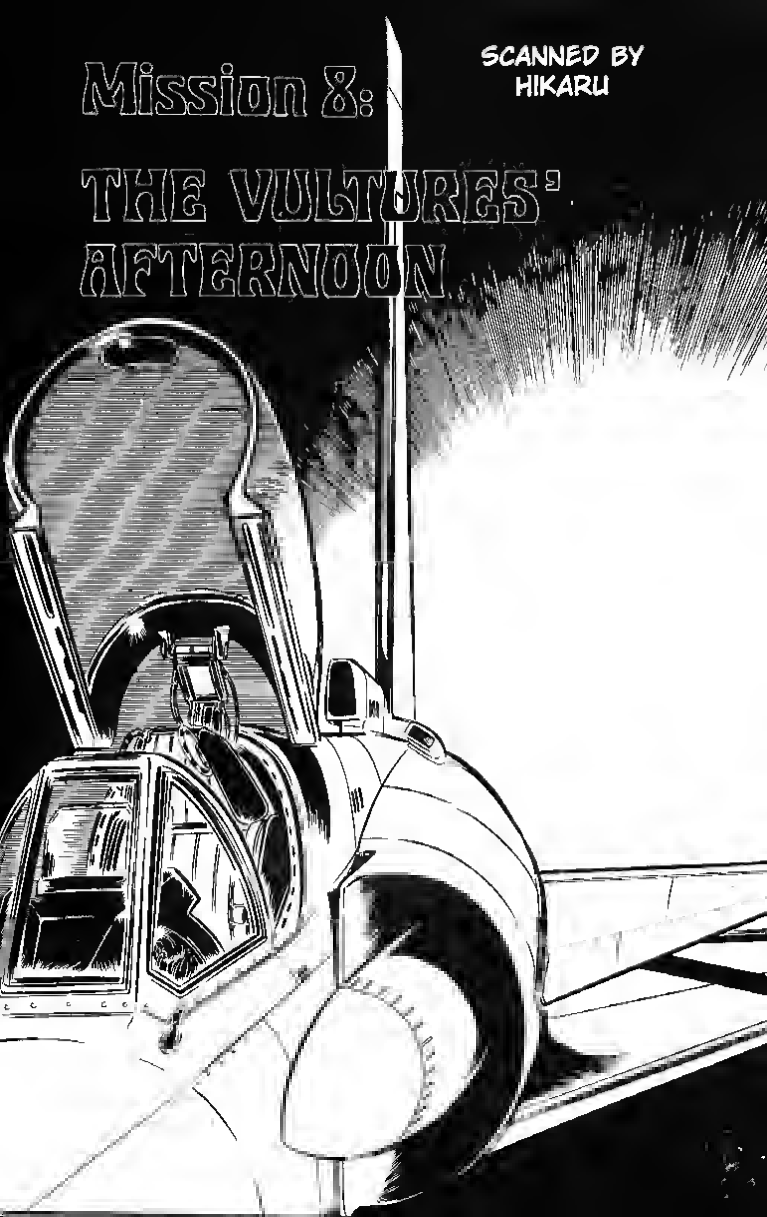
The Finest Pilots
In an Eternal War
Sweeping and Careening
Across Skies of Death

8

VIZ COMICS

SCANNED BY
HIKARU

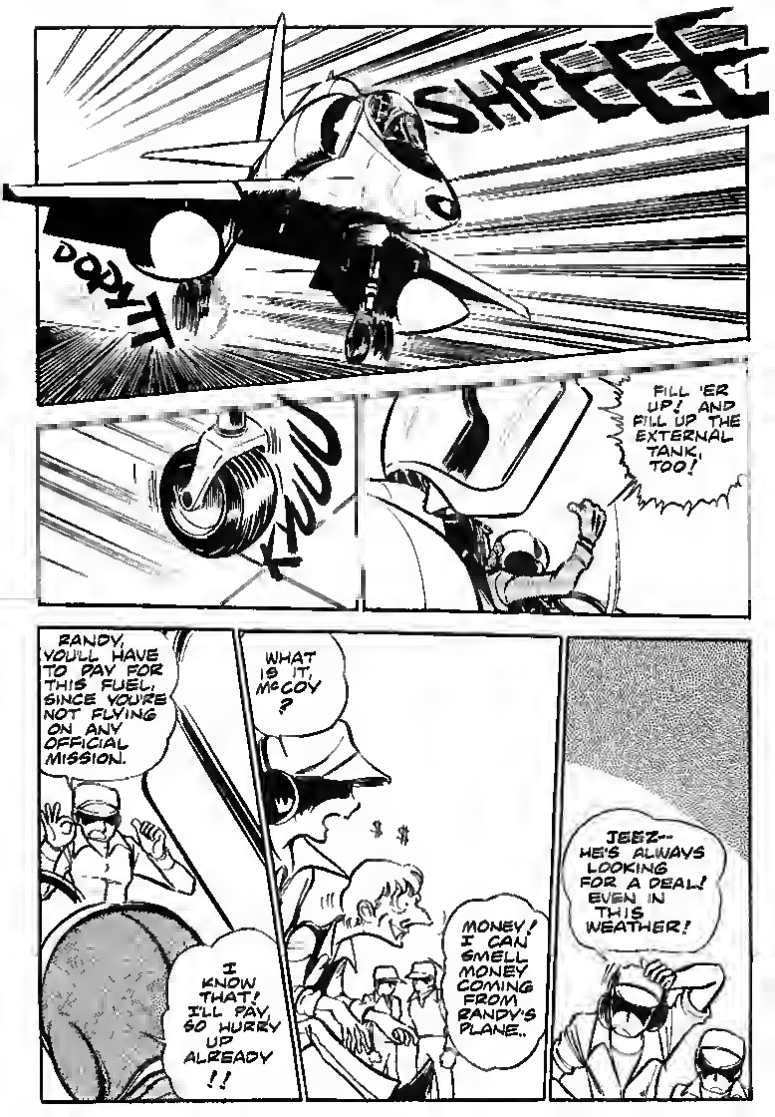
Mission 8:
THE VULTURES' AFTERNOON



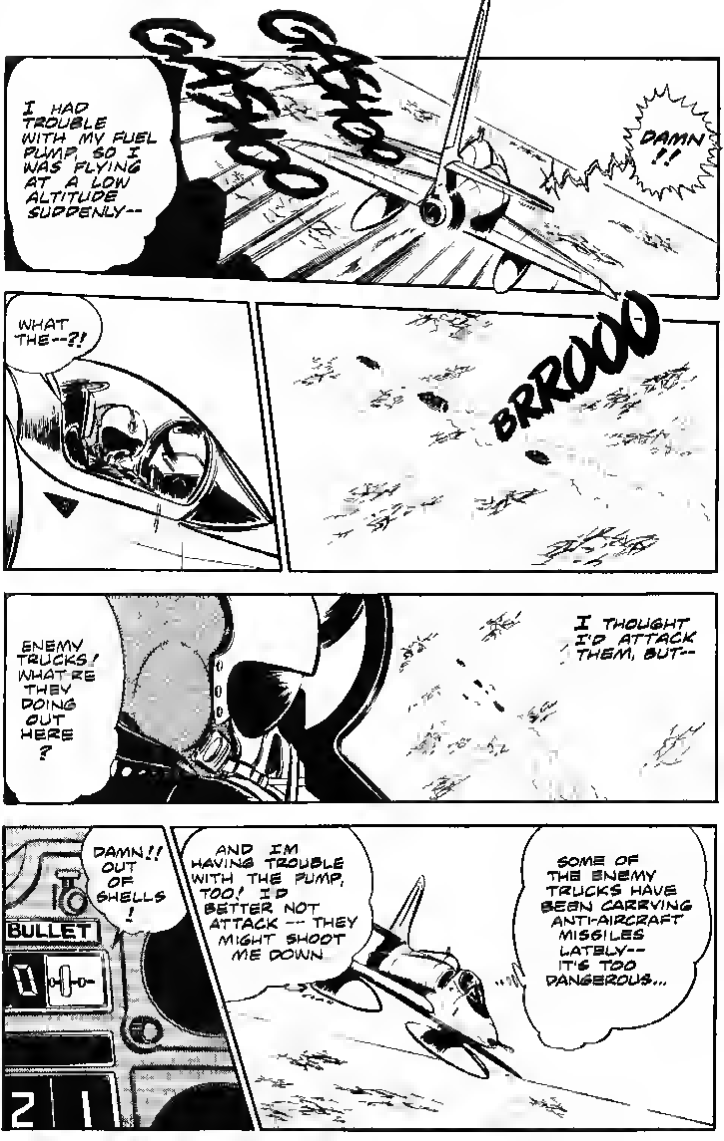
AT HIGH NOON, THE DESERT VIEW BECOMES OBSCURED, HIDING UNDER A CURTAIN OF SHIMMERING, SULTRY AIR.

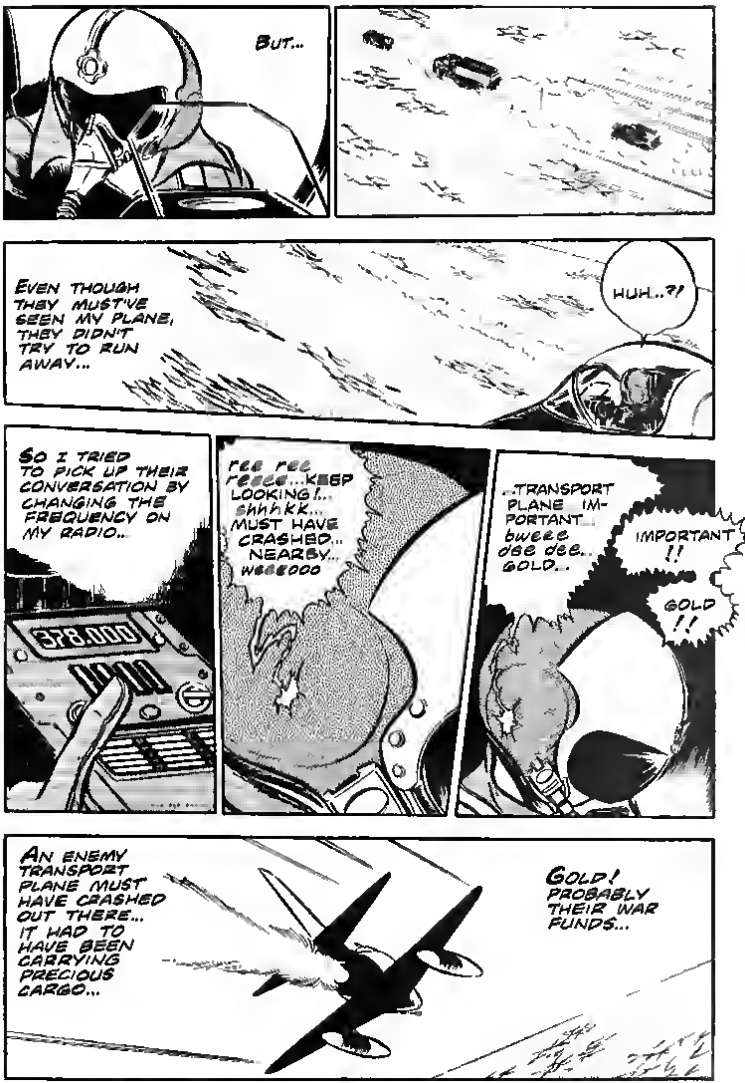
AREA 88 .. A SCORCHING, RED-HOT BATTLEGROUND...

WHAT A BOZO, MAKING A SORTIE ON A DAY LIKE THIS!
THAT'S RANDY'S SKYHAWK.
McCOY, HOW CAN YOU SEE THROUGH THIS HAZE?
I CAN TELL BY THE SOUND, NOT THE SIGHT.
HIS JET'S FUEL PUMP DOESN'T USE ALL McDONNELL-DOUGLAS PARTS.
WHEN HIS FUEL PUMP BROKE DOWN, HE REALLY HAGGLED WITH ME OVER THE PRICE. SO WHAT HE'S USING IN THERE IS BEYOND ME.
HEY, HE'S FLYING A JET, MAN! HOW COULD YOU SELL HIM UNSPECIFIED PARTS?!
WELL, IT'S ALL RIGHT SO LONG AS THEY FIT. AFTER ALL, BOYO-- MACHINES AREN'T THAT COMPLICATED.
I'M PRETTY SURE THOSE PARTS WERE FROM AN ENEMY PLANE THAT CRASHED I TOOK THE PARTS I THOUGHT WE COULD USE AND HAD A BIG SALE
THAT'S RIGHT-- I TOLD HIM IT WOULD COST A DOLLAR AND HE BEAT THE PRICE DOWN TO 80 CENTS
I'M GONNA CHECK OUT MY PLANE'S PARTS RIGHT NOW!


SHEEEE
DOOM IT
KNUU
FILL 'ER UP! AND FILL UP THE EXTERNAL TANK, TOO!
RANDY, YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY FOR THIS FUEL, SINCE YOU'RE NOT FLYING ON ANY OFFICIAL MISSION.
WHAT IS IT, McCOY ?
$ $
I KNOW THAT! I'LL PAY, SO HURRY UP ALREADY !!
MONEY! I CAN SMELL MONEY COMING FROM RANDY'S PLANE..
JEEZ-- HE'S ALWAYS LOOKING FOR A DEAL! EVEN IN THIS WEATHER!

HI, RANDY. WORKING HARD EVEN IN THIS WEATHER, EH?
HI, McCOY. HOT DAY, ISN'T IT?
OOOF-- IT'S NOT EASY GETTING UP TO THE COCKPIT OF A SKYHAWK THEY'RE BLOODY HIGH!
WELL, WHO INVITED YOU HERE?
HEY, DON'T BE SO COLD! I'LL PAY TEN PERCENT OF YOUR FUEL COSTS IF YOU TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
DON'T PLAY THE FOOL!
YOU'RE PAYING FOR JET FUEL ON A DAY LIKE THIS, SO THERE'S GOT TO BE A REASON. WHAT'RE YOU UP TO?
HA HA HA. WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH ME GETTING SOME FLIGHT TIME IN? YOU'RE A SUSPICIOUS ONE, McCOY.
ALL RIGHT, THEN--BE THAT WAY. I JUST WON'T BE SELLING YOU ANY MORE MISSILES.
WHAIT A MINUTE! HOLD ON!
WELL, I GUESS I CAN'T FOOL YOU, McCOY. BUT DON'T TELL THIS TO ANYONE.
ALL RIGHT.

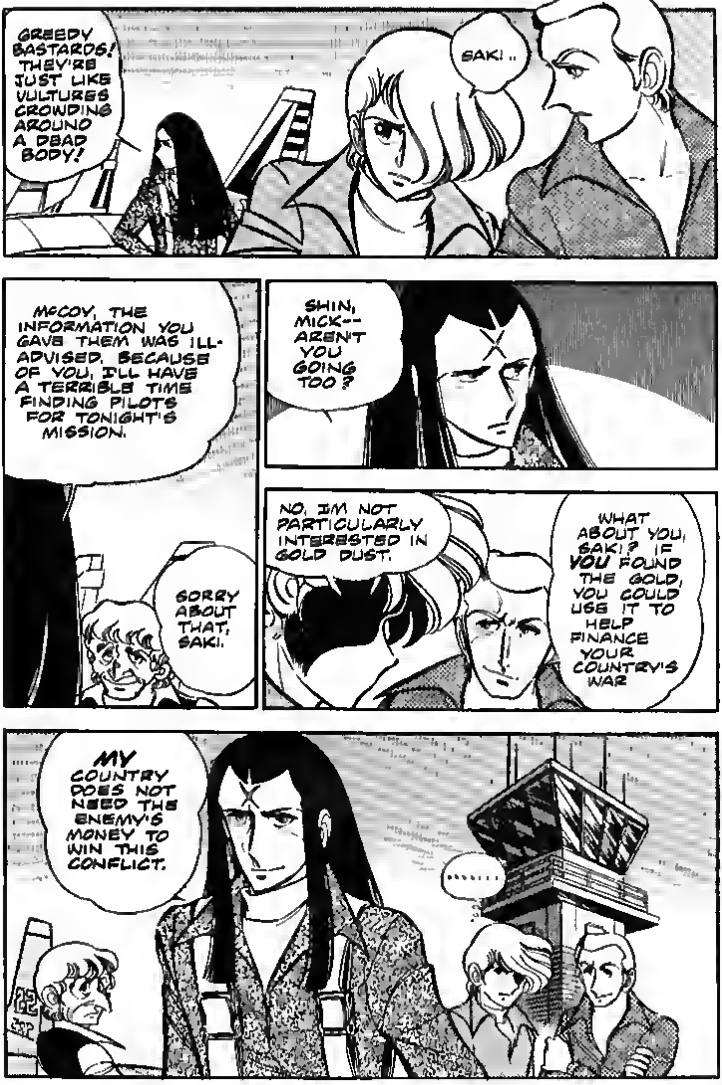

I HAD TROUBLE WITH MY FUEL PUMP, SO I WAS FLYING AT A LOW ALTITUDE SUDDENLY--
DAMN !!
WHAT THE--?!
BRRUUU
ENEMY TRUCKS! WHAT'RE THEY DOING OUT HERE?
I THOUGHT I'D ATTACK THEM, BUT--
DAMN!! OUT OF SHELLS!
BULLET
AND I'M HAVING TROUBLE WITH THE PUMP, TOO! I'D BETTER NOT ATTACK -- THEY MIGHT SHOOT ME DOWN
SOME OF THE ENEMY TRUCKS HAVE BEEN CARRYING ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES LATELY-- IT'S TOO DANGEROUS...


BUT...
EVEN THOUGH THEY MUST'VE SEEN MY PLANE, THEY DIDN'T TRY TO RUN AWAY...
HUH..?!
SO I TRIED TO PICK UP THEIR CONVERSATION BY CHANGING THE FREQUENCY ON MY RADIO..
378.000
ree ree reeee...KEEP LOOKING!... shhh.kk... MUST HAVE CRASHED... NEARBY... weeeooo
..TRANSPORT PLANE IM-PORTANT... bweee ose dee.. GOLD...
IMPORTANT !!
GOLD !!
AN ENEMY TRANSPORT PLANE MUST HAVE CRASHED OUT THERE... IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN CARRYING PRECIOUS CARGO...
GOLD! PROBABLY THEIR WAR FUNDS...

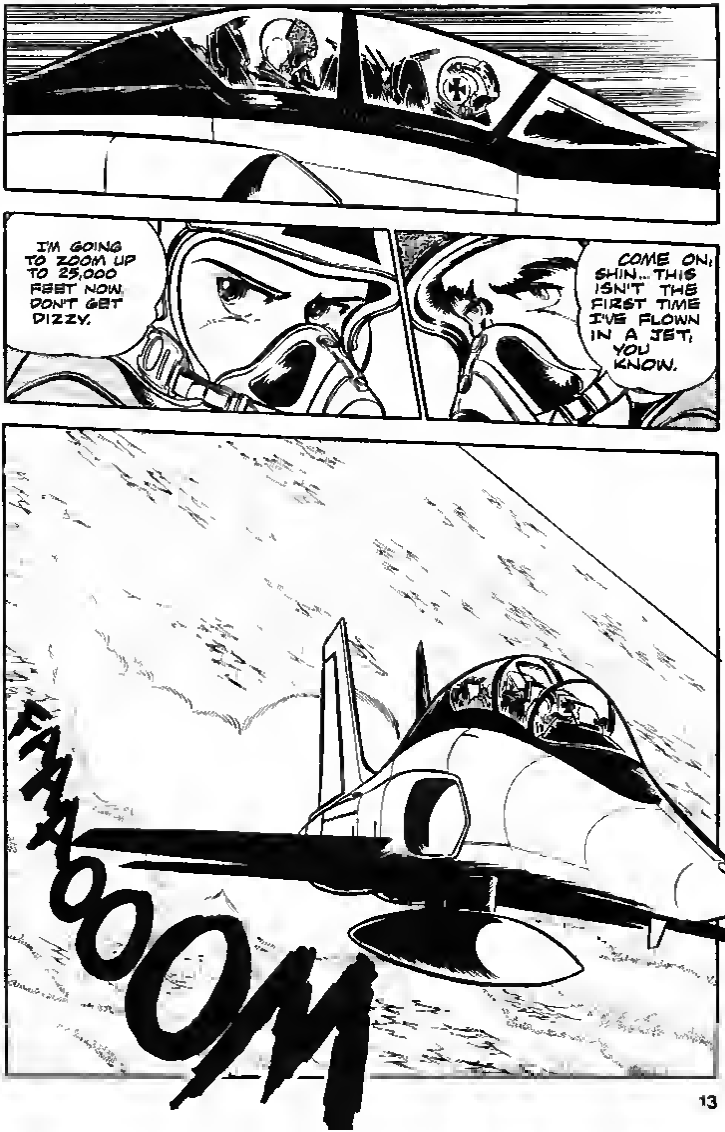
I'VE HEARD THAT THE ENEMY PAYS IN GOLD OR GOLD DUST WHENEVER THEY MAKE A DEAL...
A DOLLAR BILL WAS JUST ANOTHER PIECE OF PAPER OVER THERE.
WHEN I WAS REPORTING ON A CIVIL WAR IN ANOTHER AFRICAN COUNTRY, I FOUND THAT THEY TRUSTED GOLD DUST AND SALT THE MOST.
WELL, NOT NECESSARILY...
IT'S NOT TRUE.. RANDY WAS JUST PULLING YOUR LEG.
THEN YOU BELIEVED THAT STORY, McCOY ?
I SEE...
IT'S VERY POSSIBLE THAT THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES ARE USING GOLD DUST TO PURCHASE THEIR WEAPONS.
SLYOOO
WHAT ?!

HURRY UP AND TAKE OFF! I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!!
COME ON!! MOVE THAT PIECE OF JUNK!!

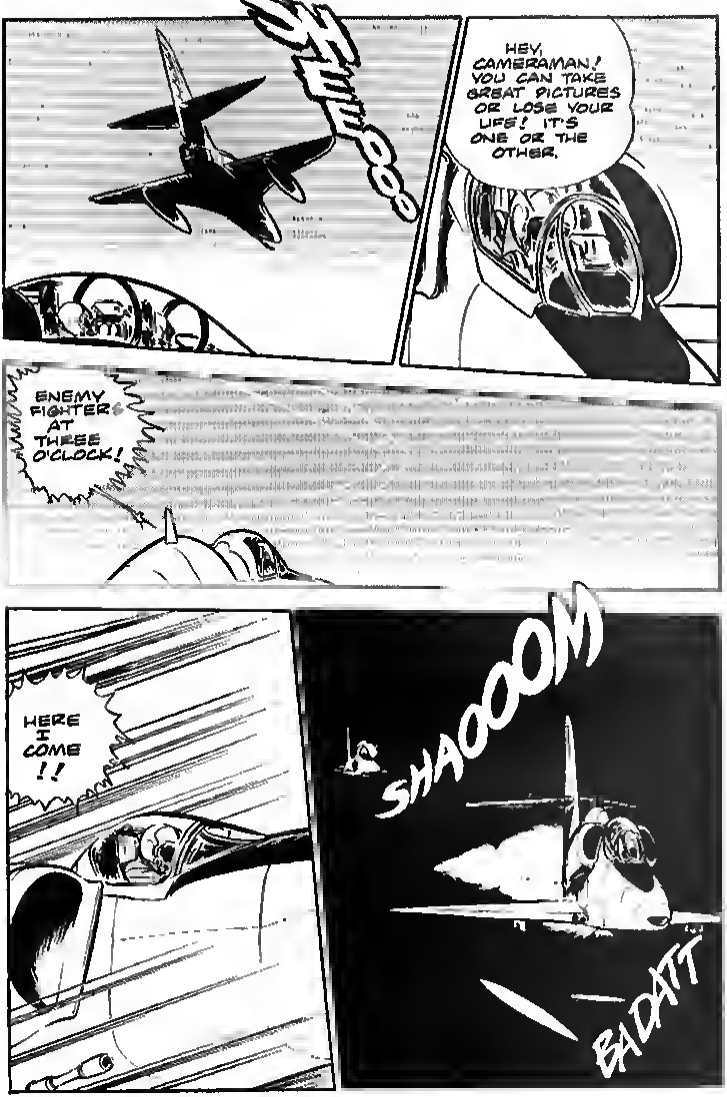
HEY EMERSON! EVEN IF YOU FIND THE TRANSPORT PLANE FIRST, DON'T GO SHOOTING AT US LIKE A BASTARD.
SHUT UP, ROBERTS! YOU CHUMP !!
I'M NOT GOING TO GUARANTEE ANYTHING! BUT I'D WATCH MY TAIL IF I WERE YOU, PAL.
BRRRRROOO
HOW MUCH DID YOU MAKE, McCOY ?
HEH HEH HEH-- ONLY A LITTLE THIS TIME, JUST A WEE BIT... FOR THE INFORMATION.
THEY TOOK OFF WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING IF THE INFORMATION IS TRUE.
BRRROOO
YEAH, WELL THEY'RE DOING IT ON THEIR OWN TIME WITH THEIR OWN MONEY.


GREEDY BASTARDS! THEY'RE JUST LIKE VULTURES CROWDING AROUND A DEAD BODY!
SAKI ..
MCCOY, THE INFORMATION YOU GAVE THEM WAS ILL-ADVISED. BECAUSE OF YOU, I'LL HAVE A TERRIBLE TIME FINDING PILOTS FOR TONIGHT'S MISSION.
SORRY ABOUT THAT, SAKI.
SHIN, MICK-- AREN'T YOU GOING TOO?
NO, IM NOT PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN GOLD DUST.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, SAKI? IF YOU FOUND THE GOLD, YOU COULD USE IT TO HELP FINANCE YOUR COUNTRY'S WAR
MY COUNTRY DOES NOT NEED THE ENEMY'S MONEY TO WIN THIS CONFLICT.
.....

SHIN, COULD YOU TAKE ME? I'LL PAY YOU.
ROCKY... DO YOU BELIEVE THAT STORY?
NO, IT'S JUST FOR MY JOB
MY PLANE ONLY HAS ONE SEAT. THERE'S NO ROOM FOR PASSENGERS.
I KNOW. I'VE RENTED A T38 TRAINING PLANE FROM McCOY.
I DON'T CARE IF THEY'RE VULTURES OR NOT. THEY'LL BE FLYING IN FORMATION, AND I CAN TAKE SOME GREAT PICTURES.
I DON'T MIND TAKING YOU, BUT WE'LL BE FLYING INTO THE WAR ZONE, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO GO OUT IN AN UNARMED T38.
WHY DON'T YOU RENT A PHANTOM OR SOMETHING?
TELL YOU WHAT-- I'LL DEFEND YOU GUYS IF ROCKY PAYS FOR THE FUEL.
THANKS, MICK! THAT'LL BE A BIG HELP!
98

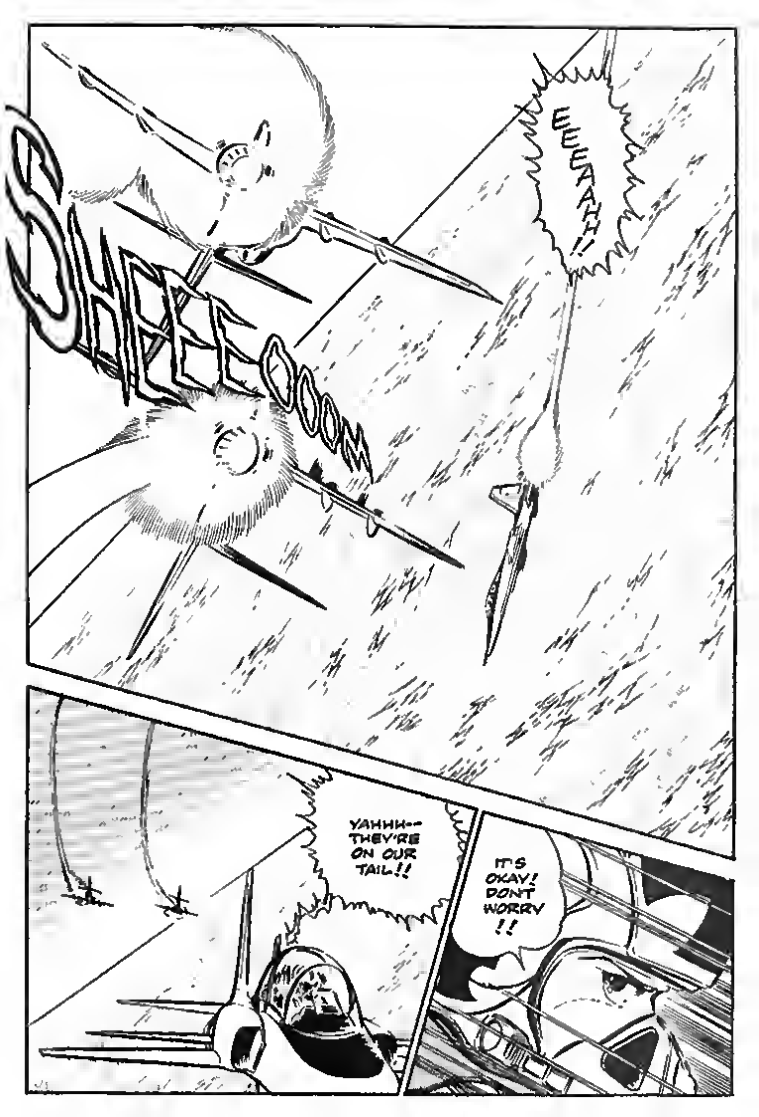

I'M GOING TO ZOOM UP TO 25,000 FEET NOW. DON'T GET DIZZY.
COME ON, SHIN... THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME I'VE FLOWN IN A JET, YOU KNOW.
ZZZOOOM

Nikon
ZOOM-NIKKOR 28~45mm 1:4.5 177598

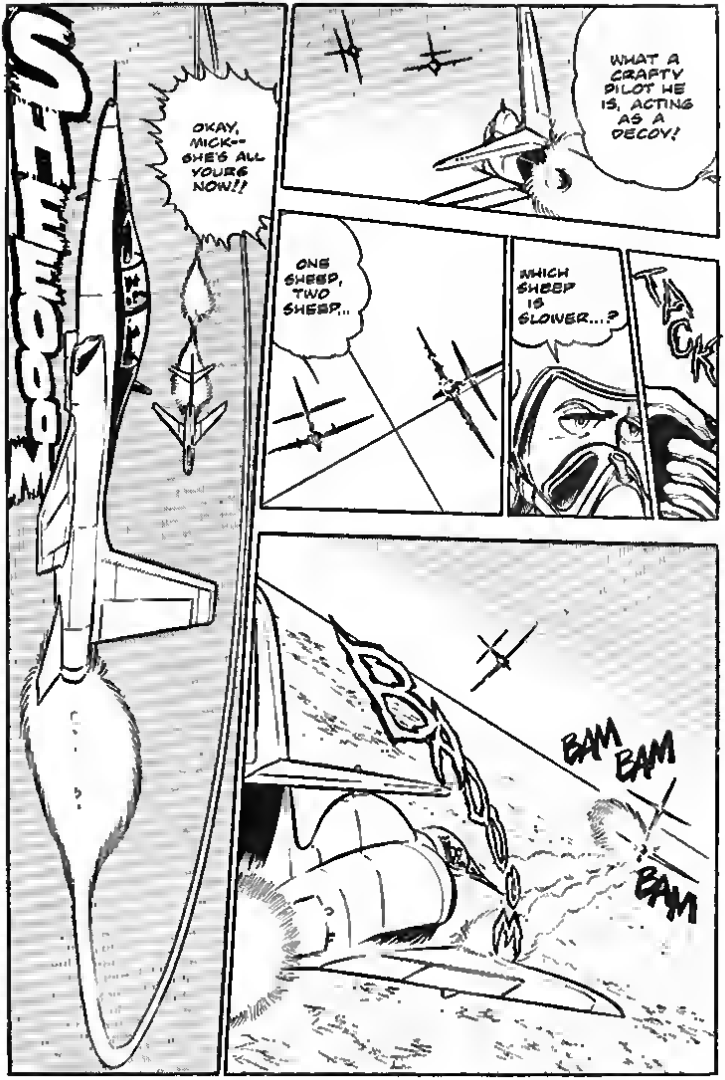

SHWOOO
HEY, CAMERAMAN! YOU CAN TAKE GREAT PICTURES OR LOSE YOUR LIFE! IT'S ONE OR THE OTHER.
ENEMY FIGHTER AT THREE O'CLOCK!
HERE I COME!!
SHAOOOM
BADATT

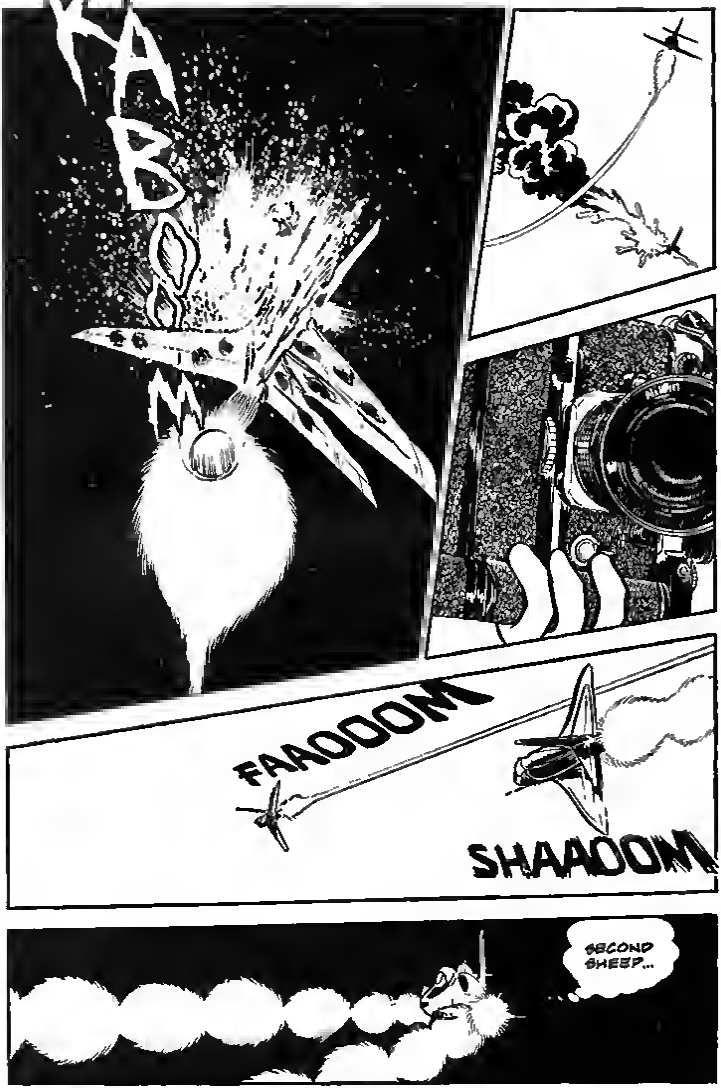
WHAT'LL WE DO, CAMERAMAN? DO WE KEEP GOING, OR RUN AWAY?
FIRST CLASS! YOU'LL RARELY FIND A PILOT THAT CAN SURVIVE A BATTLE WITH HIM!
HOW GOOD IS HE AT AERIAL BATTLES?
WHO? MICK?
FAAOOOM
BARROOM
THEN LET'S GO!
Nikon

SHEEE
I'LL GO FIRST, MICK!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?! DON'T GO AHEAD OF ME! YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANY WEAPONS!
OKAY, ROCKY-- POINT YOUR CAMERA SIDEWAYS AND HOLD IT AGAINST YOUR HEADREST.
LIKE THIS?
YOU GOT IT! HERE WE GO!!
ZAOOM

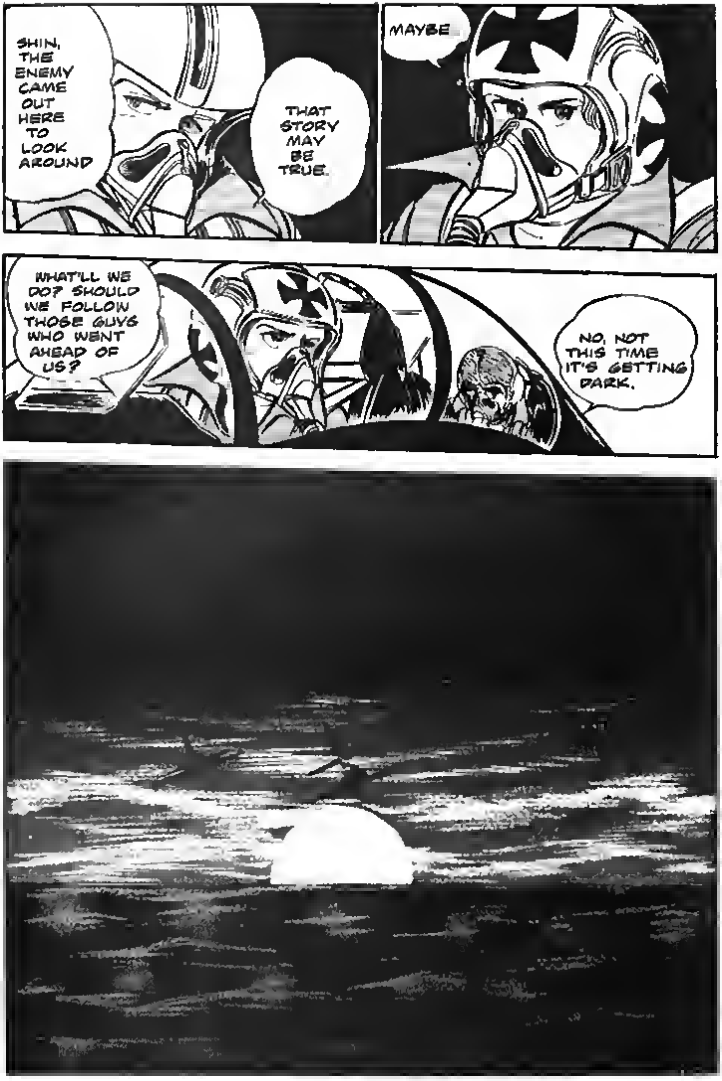

EEEAAH!!
SHEE-OOM
YAHHH--THEY'RE ON OUR TAIL!!
IT'S OKAY! DON'T WORRY!!

BADOO BADOO BADOO BADOO
PEEOW!
WAH!
GYAHH!!
KACHOW
ALL RIGHT, THE CLIMACTIC SCENE'S COMING UP!! DON'T FORGET TO PRESS YOUR SHUTTER!
UH--
YAAHH!
SHHA
AOOOM


OKAY, MICK-- SHE'S ALL YOURS NOW!!
WHAT A CRAFTY PILOT HE IS, ACTING AS A DECOY!
ONE SHEEP, TWO SHEEP...
WHICH SHEEP IS SLOWER...?
TACK
BAM BAM
BAM


KABOOM
FAAOOOM
SHAAOOM
SECOND SHEEP...

OKAY-- THAT'S IT!
HE SHOT DOWN THOSE PLANES IN NO TIME!
I TOLD YOU HE WAS GREAT: FIRST CLASS ALL THE WAY!

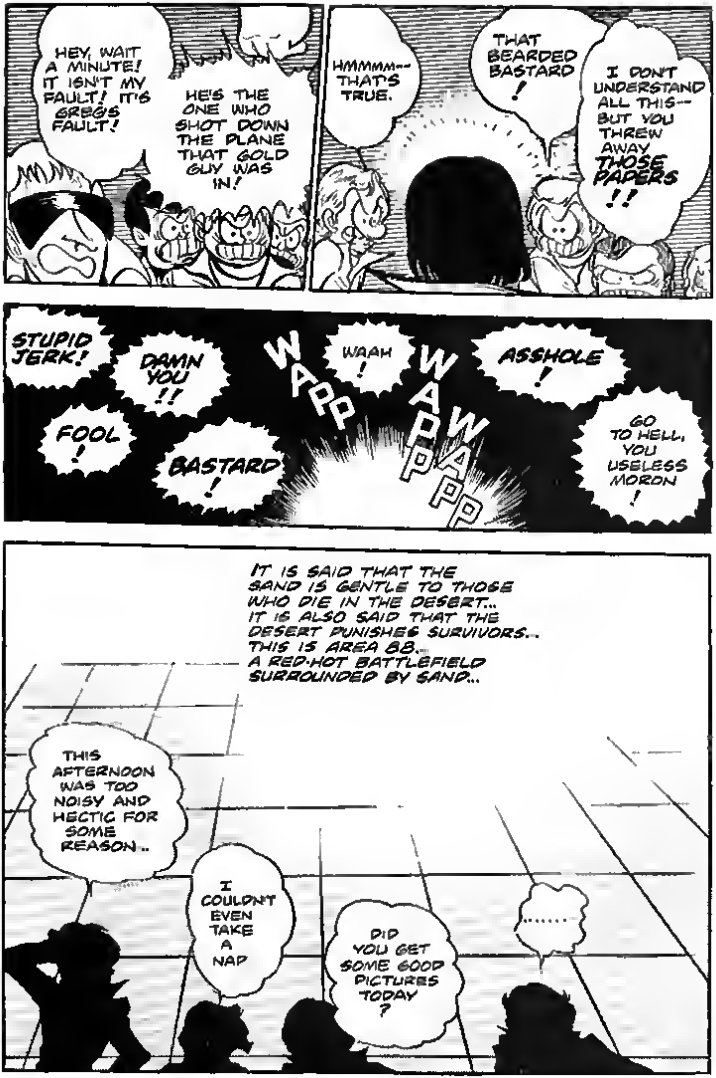

SHIN, THE ENEMY CAME OUT HERE TO LOOK AROUND
THAT STORY MAY BE TRUE.
MAYBE
WHAT'LL WE DO? SHOULD WE FOLLOW THOSE GUYS WHO WENT AHEAD OF US?
NO, NOT THIS TIME IT'S GETTING DARK.

ROBERTS! MITCHUM!
KRAMER!
HAWTHORNE!
JAMES! BENSON!
HOOVER! GONZALES!
NEILSEN!
THREE FOOLS HAVE NOT COME BACK FROM THAT TREASURE HUNT.
IT'S 20:00 HOURS AND THREE PLANES HAVE NOT RETURNED! RECORD IT!
YES, SIR!
HEEEY EVERYBODY!! GREG'S COME BACK!
GREG?! THAT BEARDED GUY?!
THAT'S THE GUY WHO WAS MISSING!
ACHOO ACHOO
?!
I CAUGHT A COLD WHILE I WAS SLEEPING IN THE DESERT!
SNIFF
I'M GLAD YOU MADE IT BACK SAFELY, GREG!
THANKS, SAKI! I'M GLAD YOU'RE OKAY, TOO!

HAVE YOU ALREADY SENT OUT MY DEATH ANNOUCEMENT?
NO NOT YET.
I WAS TAILING A TRANSPORT PLANE, TRYING TO TOY WITH IT, BUT THEY FIRED A MISSILE AT ME AND I WAS HIT.
I MANAGED TO GET THEM WITH ONE OF MY ROCKETS BEFORE I WENT DOWN WE CRASHED IN THE GAME AREA
WHAT KIND OF TRANSPORT PLANE WAS IT ?!
WHAT WAS IN IT?!
WAS THERE ANY GOLD DUST ?!
?!
WHAT'EE YOU TALKING ABOUT ?!
WE HEARD A RUMOR THAT THERE WAS GOLD DUST ON THAT PLANE YOU SHOT DOWN.
GOLD DUST ?!
NO--THERE WASN'T ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN IT. JUST THE DEAD BODY OF AN OLD GUY HE LOOKED LIKE A PRETTY HIGH-RANKING OFFICER
JUST ONE DEAD BODY... NO GOLD.

THERE WAS A NAME ON HIS BRIEF CASE. J. C. GOLD.
J. C. GOLD!! HE'S THE ENEMY'S HIGHEST RANKING TACTICAL OFFICER!
DID YOU KNOW THE GUY ?
YES. HE WAS EXCELLENT IN DESERT TACTICS. SOME CALLED HIM THE SECOND ROMMEL.
WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE PAPERS IN HIS BRIEFCASE ?
WELL, THEY WERE FULL OF UNREADABLE CHARACTERS, STRANGE LETTERS...
IT GOT REAL COLD AT NIGHT, SO I BURNED HALF OF THEM TO KEEP MYSELF WARM.
BUT THEY BURNED TOO QUICKLY-- USELESS FOR KEEPING A WARM FLAME ..
YOU BURNED THEM !!
YEAH. THEN I CAUGHT A COLD.
SNIF
I USED THE REST TO BLOW MY NOSE AND THREW THEM AWAY.

SAK!...
HEH HEH--- AH HA HA HA...
YOU BLEW YOUR NOSE AND THREW THEM AWAY!!
WHAT STUPID VULTURES! THEY MISTOOK THE NAME "GOLD" FOR REAL GOLD AND WENT OUT ON A WILD GOOSE HUNT!
IF WE HAD THOSE PAPERS, WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE ONE GREAT STROKE AGAINST THE ENEMY AND END THIS CIVIL WAR.
THEN THIS ONE FINDS IMPORTANT PAPERS MORE VALUABLE THAN GOLD AND USES THEM TO BLOW HIS NOSE!
THOSE WERE IMPORTANT CIPHER PAPERS! THE ENEMY'S SECRETS!
WELL.. I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE SO IMPORTANT.
DAMN! ONLY A NAME.
WHAT A DISAP-POINTMENT.
LET'S SEND THIS CLOWN RANDY TO A KANGAROO COURT!


HEY, WAIT A MINUTE! IT ISN'T MY FAULT! IT'S GREG'S FAULT!
HE'S THE ONE WHO SHOT DOWN THE PLANE THAT GOLD GUY WAS IN!
HMMMM--- THAT'S TRUE.
THAT BEARDED BASTARD!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ALL THIS-- BUT YOU THREW AWAY THOSE PAPERS!!
STUPID JERK!
DAMN YOU!!
FOOL!
BASTARD!
WAPP
WAAH!
WAPP
ASSHOLE!
WAPP
GO TO HELL, YOU USELESS MORON!
IT IS SAID THAT THE SAND IS GENTLE TO THOSE WHO DIE IN THE DESERT... IT IS ALSO SAID THAT THE DESERT PUNISHES SURVIVORS... THIS IS AREA 88... A RED-HOT BATTLEFIELD SURROUNDED BY SAND...
THIS AFTERNOON WAS TOO NOISY AND HECTIC FOR SOME REASON..
I COULDN'T EVEN TAKE A NAP
DID YOU GET SOME GOOD PICTURES TODAY?
.....